

## **GALVESTON BAY ESTUARY PROGRAM (GBEP)**

### **DRAFT - Galveston Bay Council (GBC) Meeting Minutes – April 21, 2021**

#### **Attendees:**

**Galveston Bay Council Chair:** Glenn Clingenpeel (Trinity River Authority)

**Galveston Bay Council Vice-Chair:** Albert Gonzales (Low Income Communities)

**Estuary Program Staff Lead:** Lisa Marshall (GBEP)

*Due to issues with COVID-19, the April 21, 2021 quarterly GBC meeting was held through the WebEx conferencing service.*

**Members Present:** Andrea Catanzaro, Glenn Clingenpeel, Winfred Colbert, Vance Darr, Bryan Eastham, Albert Gonzales, Elizabeth Fazio Hale, Lori Hamilton, Cruz Hinojosa, Brian Koch, Kristen Lambrecht, Mike Lee, Helen Paige, Nancy Parra, Anna Partin, Pamela Plotkin, Melissa Porter, Hanadi Rifai, Caimee Schoenbaechler, Rusty Senac, Linda Shead, Shane Simpson, Charrish Stevens, Bob Stokes, Sue Theiss, Jeff Taebel, Maria Valdez, Kirk Wiles

**Members Not Present/Delegates:** Scott Alford, Garry McMahan, Russ Poppe\*, Lisa Rickards\*, Taylor Rieck\*, Ronnie Schultz, Mary Beth Stengler

(\*=Member designated a proxy)

**Proxies Present (GBC member absent/designated proxy):** Russ Poppe/Glenn Laird, Lisa Rickards/Doug Jacobson, Taylor Rieck/Shane Bonnot

**Current Vacancies:** None

**Other Attendees:** Auggie Campbell, Amin Kiaghadi, Christina Lindsay, Cheryl Mergo, Kerry Niemann, Jaime Padgett, Mary Anne Piacentini, Dianna Ramirez, Amy Settemeyer, Carion Taylor, Lori Traweck

**Additional GBEP Staff Present:** Cynthia Clevenger, Lindsey Lippert, Kristen McGovern, Christian Rines, Doretta Thomas, Patricia Thompson

#### **Call to Order: Introduction of Members and Delegates**

Glenn Clingenpeel brought the meeting to order.

#### **Action Item: Approval of January 20, 2021 Meeting Minutes**

Mr. Clingenpeel opened the meeting with approval of the minutes. A motion was requested for approval. Brian Koch moved to approve the minutes, and a second was made by Nancy Parra.

#### **Report of the Chair**

Mr. Clingenpeel stated that many are still teleworking, including the GBEP staff but hopefully we will be getting back to normal soon.

## Report of the Program

Ms. Marshall announced that GBEP will be interviewing soon for the Education and Outreach Coordinator position and is hoping the position will be filled by early June.

A new informational video was launched by the Association of National Estuary Programs. It highlights projects by various estuary programs and how important they are for protecting natural resources in the surrounding estuaries. The videos can be found on the GBEP website under [About](#) and [National Estuary Program](#).

Ms. Marshall discussed the results of the Galveston Bay Council Survey. (Presentation is attached.) Highlights from the survey include:

- Provide an ongoing forum for technical and stakeholder review and involvement for implementation of The Plan” selected as most valuable role.
- Information sharing” selected as what entities most gain from being a part of the GBC.
- Provide information and resources” selected as what would most help your organization/agency best accomplish its current goals.
- Majority of members satisfied with current structure. Near even distribution of answer choices, with “open discussions” as what most and “panel discussions” the second members would like to include more of in GBC meetings.
- “Upper management” selected as who most information from GBC meetings is shared with.
- Near even distribution of answer choices, with “State Government” as most common organization selected and “Academia” as least.

Linda Shead suggested the Budget and Priorities Subcommittee help coordinate panels and open discussions for GBC meetings in the future.

Albert Gonzales suggested once meetings are in-person again, name plates should be randomly placed around the room so that people would be sitting next to someone different at each meeting.

Ms. Marshall announced that GBEP received an additional \$100,000 in federal funding from the US Environmental Protection Agency. The staff revised the budget to incorporate the additional funds. Patricia Thompson explained the changes to the budget and work plan.

**Presentation:** *Regional Conservation Framework* – Jeff Taebel, Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC)

Mr. Taebel presented H-GAC’s new Regional Conservation Framework. H-GAC is a voluntary association of governments and regional planning organization that covers 13 counties in the Houston-Galveston region. The framework is the initial step in developing a regional conservation plan that supports conservation projects to maintain, restore, and enhance natural areas in the community. The framework received input from a wide range of locally elected officials and other key staff across the 13 counties with over 100 participants. The framework is a strategy to coordinate

and magnify local conservation efforts to enhance resiliency and the quality of life in the region's communities. The Regional Conservation Framework, the Conservation Funding Guide, and other resources are available on the H-GAC [website](#).

**Presentation:** *Storage Tank Vulnerability in Flood-Prone Areas* – Jamie Padgett, Ph.D., Rice University and Leticia Ablaza, Air Alliance Houston

Dr. Padgett presented information on infrastructure vulnerability from multiple hazards in the Houston region. Coastal industrial regions are strategically positioned to be close to ports, lending these areas to be susceptible to impacts from major coastal storm events. Dr. Padgett stated the oil and gas industry suffered damage during nearly every major US storm event since 1990. An analysis of those events highlighted aboveground storage tanks as being particularly vulnerable, making up 74% of the damage incidents compared to pipeworks (17%), cylinder vessels (5%), and fixed equipment (4%). Aboveground storage tank failures during major storm events are linked to hazardous chemical spills (e.g., Katrina & Rita 26 million liters and Harvey 2.2. million liters) and other environmental, economic, and social impacts. Dr. Padgett's research group is working on an integrated risk assessment framework to develop infrastructure vulnerability and coastal hazard models for the Houston Ship Channel and other regions to explore social/place vulnerabilities, mitigation strategies, and policy solutions.

Ms. Ablaza then presented on work being conducted by Air Alliance Houston, which is a nonprofit with the mission that everyone has the right to breathe clean air and that where you live, work, learn, and play should not determine your health. As an organization, they bring information on environmental issues like the research being conducted by Dr. Padgett on aboveground storage tank vulnerabilities to legislators as advocates for the community. Air Alliance Houston is also a part of the Healthy Ports Community Coalition and conducts community air monitoring. They are working on filling in spatial gaps where Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) does not have air monitors installed. Air monitor information and locations are available on an interactive map on the Air Alliance Houston [website](#).

**Presentation:** *Buffalo Bayou & Tributaries Resiliency Study and Interim Report Alternative* – Augustus (Auggie) Campbell JD, ENV SP, Association of Water Board Directors and Mary Anne Piacentini, Katy Prairie Conservancy

Mr. Campbell introduced Houston Stronger, a nonprofit founded in 2017 following Hurricane Harvey, which aims to improve coastal resiliency across Brazoria, Fort Bend, Galveston, Waller, Montgomery, Harris, Liberty, and Chambers Counties.

Ms. Piacentini discussed the Buffalo Bayou Community Plan, which proposes to use natural infrastructure and creative engineering solutions to reduce flooding upstream and downstream of the buffalo Bayou watershed as well as assist other communities outside of the watershed. Buffalo Bayou was chosen as the focus for this plan largely due to the desire to recommend alternatives to the proposed channelization of Buffalo Bayou.

Components of the plan include constructing a 40-foot diameter tunnel to convey >10,000 cubic feet per second of flood water from the Barker and Addicks Reservoirs

to the Houston Ship Channel, increasing the capacities of both Addicks and Barker Reservoirs, and preserving land upstream of the reservoirs to improve drainage.

### **Subcommittee Updates**

1. *Monitoring and Research (M&R)*: The M&R Subcommittee held their quarterly meeting on March 10<sup>th</sup>. A discussion was held on the impacts of Winter Storm Uri on marine life around the bay. There was also a presentation by David Wells at Texas A&M University Galveston (TAMUG) on the movements and habitat use patterns of coastal fishes in Galveston Bay using acoustic telemetry. Jim Dobberstine from Lee College shared about his work supporting undergraduate research activities through engagement in research projects related to habitat conservation efforts in Galveston Bay through collaborations with several local partners such as Galveston Bay Foundation (GBF) and University of Houston Clear Lake (UHCL). The *Galveston Bay Intertidal Oyster Reef Mapping and Analysis* project recently closed, and all three M&R fiscal year 21 projects are now executed with approved Quality Assurance Project Plans and have commenced data collection. The next M&R meeting will be held on June 9<sup>th</sup> to discuss priorities for fiscal year 23 project planning.
2. *Natural Resource Uses (NRU)*: The NRU Subcommittee held their quarterly meeting April 12<sup>th</sup>. A discussion was held on the impacts of Winter Storm Uri around the bay, including updates on vegetation from TAMUG and Armand Bayou Nature Center on vegetation, Houston Audubon on birds, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department on finfish, and TAMUG on sea turtles. The Conservation Assistance Program workgroup will hold the next meeting May 7<sup>th</sup>. The next NRU meeting will be held in June to discuss priorities for fiscal year 23 project planning.
3. *Public Participation and Education (PPE)*: The PPE Subcommittee held its quarterly meeting on April 1<sup>st</sup> and heard a presentation on H-GAC's Regional Equity Tool, an interactive application that identifies the distribution of the region's vulnerable communities within the H-GAC's 13 county jurisdiction. This includes low to moderate income populations and historical settlements. The Subcommittee also discussed other equity resources such as the EPA's EJScreen tool that highlights areas to target for environmental justice. PPE also discussed how outreach and education efforts were changed and, in many ways, enhanced to address the challenges during the pandemic. Many organizations provided successful virtual events, and some groups even saw the same level of participation as in the previous year.
4. *Water and Sediment Quality (WSQ)*: The WSQ Subcommittee held their last quarterly meeting on March 10<sup>th</sup>. Zulimar Lucena shared selected sampling sites for the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Microplastics in Galveston Bay project. There was also a presentation by Mac Martin on the role of forests and trees in urban watershed management. The implementation of the Double Bayou WPP project with the Houston Advanced Research Center (HARC) will be completed by May 31<sup>st</sup>. Implementation efforts will continue beyond the GBEP contract. The project's Final Report will be available on the GBEP website sometime in June. Sampling for the Targeted Bacteria Monitoring project with H-GAC and Bayou Preservation Association will reconvene in May with a new set of interns.

The team was able to report a problem location to the City of Houston, which they are waiting to hear back on. Both USGS Microplastics projects, Tributaries and Galveston Bay, are awaiting an amendment to reflect a change in the lab location before processing samples. The outreach implementation for water quality projects with H-GAC contract is just getting underway. All fiscal year 22 projects are still in the contract approval process. WSQ will meet next on June 9<sup>th</sup> to identify the subcommittee's priorities for fiscal year 23.

For Subcommittee meeting dates, times, and more information, visit the GBEP [website](#).

### **Council Members Roundtable: News and Announcements**

**Lisa Marshall (TCEQ GBEP)** – A couple of companion bills concerning preproduction plastics were introduced in the house and senate relating to the regulation by TCEQ of the discharge of preproduction plastics from point and nonpoint sources to ensure zero discharge or release of plastic into water, or onto land in the state, and to ensure the prompt cleanup of any discharge or release of plastics. Preproduction plastics are things like powders, fibers, flakes, pellets, and nurdles that are byproducts from creating plastics.

**Kerry Niemann (TCEQ WQPD)** – Regarding the TMDL Program:

- Two TMDLs for indicator bacteria at Corpus Christi Beaches, Cole Park and Ropes Park are scheduled to go to Agenda for adoption on July 28<sup>th</sup>.
- One TMDL and one Implementation Plan for indicator bacteria in Arenosa Creek are scheduled to go to Agenda for adoption and approval respectively on August 11<sup>th</sup>.
- One TMDL for indicator bacteria in Hillebrandt Bayou is scheduled to go to Agenda for adoption on August 11<sup>th</sup>.
- Two TMDLs for indicator bacteria in Caney Creek are scheduled to go to Agenda for adoption on August 11<sup>th</sup>.

Regarding the NPS Program: The 2022 Nonpoint Management Program (Management Program) is scheduled to go to agenda for release for public comment on May 19<sup>th</sup>. The Management Program outlines the state's comprehensive strategy to protect and restore water quality impacted by nonpoint source pollution. The Management Program in Texas is jointly administered by the TCEQ and the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board (TSSWCB). The document describes state programs, program coordination mechanisms, goals, milestones, priorities, tracking, and reporting. The annual Request for Grant Applications (RFGA) is tentatively scheduled to open on June 1, 2021. The solicitation will post for 45 days and close on July 16, 2021. The RFGA provides instructions and guidance for applicants seeking funding under the CWA Section 319(h) grant program in Texas. The RFGA is a competitive process which solicits applications for grant funding.

Regarding the 2020 Integrated Report: EPA approved the report on May 12, 2020.

Regarding Water Quality Standards: The Surface Water Quality Standards Advisory Work Group held two half-day meetings on June 29 and June 30, 2020. The agenda and handouts are available on the TCEQ website.

Regarding the Clean Rivers Program: The calendar of Steering Committee Meeting dates may be accessed from the statewide Coordinated Monitoring Schedule. Meetings occur throughout the year and help to establish monitoring priorities.

**Caimee Schoenbaechler (Texas Water Development Board TWDB)** – TWDB in partnership with the USGS and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Galveston District received a grant for a joint planning project called the Texas Integrated Flooding Framework to develop an integrated framework to simulate compound flooding in Hurricane Harvey impacted areas. Since the last update, technical advisory teams were formed to guide the four primary project components. Ms. Schoenbaechler was pleased and grateful to report that both Ms. Marshall and Dr. Hanadi Rifai with the University of Houston from the council will participate as technical advisers for the planning and outreach component of the project, and TWDB is slated to give the council an overview of the project at the upcoming July meeting. Also, TWDB's Water for Texas Conference will be hosted September 27-29, 2021 at the AT&T Conference Center in Austin, Texas. This will be an in-person event, and they are planning for proper safety measures to be in place. The conference theme is Clear Vision for the Future, and it will include topics on water, science, and technology, drought and flooding, innovative solutions to water challenges, and Texas water policy and communication strategies. Visit the [website](#) for early registration, which is now open.

**Mike Lee (USGS)** – The USGS Gulf Coast Branch has launched a new [website](#), that focuses on coastal science. There are two features. One is an exploratory feature with a map to view and download data collected by the office in cooperation with their partners, and the second is a section that describes the work being conducted by the branch. The site is brand new. Mr. Lee encouraged everyone to explore the site and provide feedback.

**Public Comment:** None

**Adjourn:** The meeting was adjourned at 12:17 p.m.

**Upcoming Galveston Bay Council Meeting Dates:** April 21, 2021; July 21, 2021; October 20, 2021; and January 19, 2022. Meetings are held on the third Wednesday of the quarter from 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.